DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 159 890 FL 009 654

AUTHOR James, Charles J.
TITLE The Image of Present Day American Society in English Language Textbooks Used in Germany. Didaktischer Brief, No. 76.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 36p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Culture; American English; American History; *Cultural Education; *Cultural Images; *English (Second Language); Ethnic Groups; Geographic Regions; Geography; Human Geography; *Language Instruction; Language Programs; Minority Groups; Pronunciation; Secondary Education; Second Language Learning; Sociocultural Patterns; Spelling; Stereotypes; Textbook Bias; *Textbook Content; *Textbook Evaluation; Textbook Research; Textbooks; Tourism
IDENTIFIERS English Language Textbooks; West Germany

ABSTRACT

An analysis is presented of nine textbooks that have been developed in Germany for English language instruction in secondary schools. The purpose of the study is to describe the view that Germans appear to have of the United States as reflected in the information and opinions expressed in these textbooks. It is noted that all the textbooks introduce students to English by way of British English and society, a precondition that automatically slants what is said about the United States. Three aspects of the question are discussed in detail: (1) the geography of the U.S.; (2) the people and ethnic groups; and (3) the language of Americans and the approach to American English. With regard to geography, the impression is given that the United States is a very large, vaguely defined country with a few cities and vast stretches of land in between them. Regarding people, it is found that the factual information is often overly concerned with touristic curiosities or racial minorities. Finally, the treatment of language is considered generally satisfactory, except for a few misrepresentations of American English pronunciation and spelling. A discussion in the form of answers to questions from English teachers in Germany concludes the paper. (AMH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED159890

The Image of Present-Day American Society in English Language Textbooks used in Germany

© Charles J. James

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Charles J. James

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

FL009659

Preface

This paper is based on a talk with the same title given as part of a seminar entitled "Die Vereinigten Staaten heute", given under the auspices of the "Amerika Haus, Nürnberg" and the "Pädagogisches Institut Nürnberg" in cooperation with the "Bezirksfachgruppe Neuere Sprachen im Bayerischen Philologenverband" and the "Fachverband Moderne Fremdsprachen" on November 26, 1977.

It represents the personal views of the author, based on an analysis of the textbooks listed under "References." The author does not pretend that these are the only textbooks of English on the West German market or that the ones described here are even the best ones available. They represent the sample made available to the author at the time of the seminar.

In the course of the discussion following the formal presentation other textbooks were mentioned as possible alternatives or additions. In addition the topic of the present paper was critically and openly discussed, in a lively and truly constructive manner rarely experienced by the author. Some of the suggestions and criticisms have been incorporated into the present printed paper.

Naturally the author thanks the participants in the seminar for their comments and suggestions. In addition the author would like to single out three people for special thanks:

Anton Bemmerlein, for inviting the author to present the paper and for providing access to many of the textbooks reviewed;

Jennifer Richardson-Schlötter and her husband,Gerhard Schlötter, for making many helpful suggestions, supplying useful supplementary material and giving a substantial amount of the proper kind of encouragement.

Foreword

The style of most professional publications, whether in linguistics, literature, history or education; whether in English or German, has a tendency to be quite boring. The reader who does not believe this has apparently not read very much in the way of contemporary professional literature! The result is often that the "message" an author is trying to convey in what he or she writes is lost in a sea of pseudo-professional verbosity, no matter how sincere the intention or stimulating the ideas he or she may represent. The style of the present paper borders more on the colloquial than on the "professional," although the author was thoroughly professional in his intentions and, hopefully, in the resulting product. Since the purpose of the paper is to stimulate discussion and further examination of the premises behind the presentation of American society in English textbooks used in West German secondary schools, the last thing the author wants is to stifle interest by turning too many a clever and erudite, but also esoteric phrase, and thereby talk past his audience.

It is therefore hoped that the reader of this paper will find something that she or he can use in her or his teaching, if she or he is a teacher of English, or that he or she considers thought provoking for whatever reason, if he or she is a critical observer of the current educational scene. Besides which, the author enjoyed writing this paper; he hopes this shows through in the following pages.

One more note, but an important one. At various places in the text the author has placed the symbol "++". This does not mean that two people have died, but rather that a longer text passage has not been quoted in its entirety, although the whole passage is important to an understanding of the comments made about it. There are reasons for not quoting the passages in their entirety, mainly those of space and

copyright. The reader is encouraged, however, to look at the original texts in their original contexts, since they have been ripped from their contexts; this is true even of the oral presentation where the texts were read to underscore the particular point under discussion. The impression these texts create on the reader is, however, significant.

Charles J. James
Institut für Angewandte Linguistik
mit Sprachenzentrum
Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
D-8520 Erlangen

Charles J. James

The Image of Present-Day American Society in English Language Textbooks used in Germany

Most people consider it instructional to see themselves as others see them. This is especially true of a society as diversified and complex as the society that has developed in what is now known as the United States of America. The purpose of this paper is to describe the view that Germans appear to have of the U.S.A., as reflected in the information and opinion expressed in the textbooks that have been developed for instruction in the English language here in Germany. English language textbooks normally represent the first broad-based contact with the English-speaking world for German-speaking pupils. Instruction in a language requires something to use language for, namely, the explication of the life and culture of its speakers. It is for this reason that the present talk was written.

The title of this talk reads "The Image of Present-Day American Society in English Textbooks used in Germany". There is a slight ambiguity in the title. When I say "used in Germany" I mean those books produced and distributed by German publishing houses, with predominantly German writers and editors, for a predominantly German-speaking audience. The textbooks referred to represent a sample of those currently in use in German secondary schools. Time does not permit me to handle all or even the majority of the textbooks and textbook series available from German publishers. There are, of course, textbooks available here at other academic levels, as well as from other countries, specifically Great Britain and America, for English as a Foreign or Second Language; these would understandably present an image of American society somewhat different from the one I am about to report on.

In the following presentation I plan to deal with three aspects, 1) the geography of the U.S. as introduced and developed in each of the textbooks under consideration, 2) the people and ethnic groups of the U.S., and 3) the language of Americans, specifically American English and the approach to American English in German textbooks.

At the outset it should be pointed out that all German textbooks of English examined for this paper introduce pupils to English through the medium of British English and British society. Not one begins with English as spoken (and listened to, if you wish) in the United States. Exceptions are of course those books which are devoted strictly to America but these usually appear at a stage well beyond the beginning level. This fact represents a basic precondition for learning about American society which automatically gives a slant to what is said about America and American Society even before the first word is uttered about the United States.

This fact has its causes, understandable causes at that, due to the geographical proximity of England and the recent "Europeanization" of Great Britain as a result of its membership in the European Community. Even so, this must be kept in mind if one is to appreciate what German publishers apparently allow their secondary school pupils learn about American society. If you like, we are dealing with a kind of double preconditioning of pupils in their introduction to American society: a German and a British.

1) Geography

In order to appreciate how people live, it is first necessary to know where they live and what kind of physical environment they have to deal with.

Let's begin with Learning English.

Teil 1(A1) does not mention the U.S. specifically and thus can be left out of the investigation.

The first direct reference to the U.S. can be found on p. 67 of Teil 2 (A2) with the presentation of the Pilgrim Fathers, although we find them still in England, then crossing the sea, "westward across the Atlantic Ocean," then in Plymouth, their first colony." The next reference comes on p. 74, where the events surrounding the so-called Boston Tea Party are related. Then follows a brief description of the design of the American flag, mentioning only Alaska and Hawaii by name. Seven pages later, specifically on p. 81, we learn about the California gold rush.

On p. 82, finally, we find the first map of the United States, with the following towns indicated: New York, St.-Joseph and Kansas City (Missouri), Sacramento and San Francisco (California). None of the aforementioned places, such as Plymouth or Boston, the States of Alaska and Hawaii are shown on this or any other map in this book. In following sections, place names such as Washington D.C. , Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Detroit are mentioned, but none of these are shown in relation to one another on a map. Without additional aid from the teacher the pupil would therefore have to assume that these cities and towns are just out there somewhere. The book does not help much. This situation is improved somewhat in Teil 3 (A3) which has a map of the U.S. on the inside back cover of the book as well as on p. 42, which begins a discussion of "America and the Americans" about which more later. There is also a series of photographs on pp. 5o-52 of the White House, the Lincoln Memorial, the skyline of New York a scene in the Rockies, San Francisco with the Golden Gate Bridge and Hawaii a beach near Honolulu. As far as geography is concerned this represents the extent of an introduction to the physical reality of the U.S. in this series.

One place that is given a more detailed description is New York City (p. 94-95) where we learn that it is located on the Island of Manhattan, is the second largest city in the world (at least as of 197o), is ten times larger than Washington,

the Federal Capital (wherever that is), is a powerful financial center, and is the home of the United Nations.

The situation is slightly different in Learning English: Modern Course, which has a map of the U.S. on the inside of the back cover of both levels under consideration, but none in the text itself. There is, in Gym 3, a description, with photos, of New York City, starting on p. 35, including a rough map of Manhattan with the Empire State and the PanAm Buildings, the World Trade Center, the United Nations, etc. The next bit of geographical Americana consists of 3 photos related to a visit to Florida by our textbook heroes, Jim and Helen, but only one of the three photos is definitely of Florida, namely that of the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, the other two being a picture of a surfer (could be Florida of course, or California or Hawaii!) and the other of a Greyhound Bus (headed for New Orleans, which is nowhere near Miami, the intended destination.) Gym 4 of Learning English: Modern Course presents on p. 32 four pictures of so-called "houses in America," but contrary to what one would expect in terms of American domestic architecture, what you have is a Georgia plantation from the year 1800 (no doubt now a state or national monument), a street in New Orleans' French Quarter (not exactly typically American architecture!), the John Hancock Building in Chicago (no comment), and then a real present day house, namely a suburban home with attached garage in Colorado Springs, although no further proof is given of the location of Colorado Springs, or to what extent this is typical of houses in other parts of the U.S. (as a matter of fact most suburban areas of the U.S. have houses of that style, though not always).

The next bit of geography follows on p. 35, with a photo of a covered wagon somewhere on the American prairie, then a picture on p. 37 of a mobile home park (with reference to the "restless American who prefers mobile homes to permanent ones.") The next substantial geography lesson comes on pp.

73-76 where the westward movement is narrated against the background of the "North American Indian", whose lands are presented in some detail on a colored map, an admittedly interesting and useful addition, since it shows where tribes such as the Sious, Navaho, Nez Perce, etc. actually live or lived before the coming of the white man. There is also a map of the historical expansion, in broad terms, of the U.S. from 1775 to 1848, that is, from the original 13 States to the Mexican Cession of 1848. A few pages further on the Battle of the Little Big Horn is mentioned, with references to the "Black Hills of Dakota." These are not however, indicated on the special North American Indian map, although the two Dakotas are labeled on the map on the inside back cover.

The last bit of geography in this book (Gym 4) is in the form of a photo of a shopping area (including McDonalds and a Robert Hall Clothing Store) located in "Texas USA, near the Mexican border".
As with the house in Colorado Springs, the information about Texas USA is truly enlightening, since the place could easily be in Iowa USA near the Illinois border or Michigan USA near the Canadian border, or even Bavaria Germany near the Austrian border!

Allow me an aside.
It is interesting to note that most [places] [American] names are rendered in German textbooks (as well as other books printed in Germany) without the name of the particular state. This is not especially confusing when dealing with well known unique entities such as Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, or San Francisco. It is however quite irritating to see a place name like "Springfield" or "Washington" or "Bloomington", since there are more than one of each!

The series English for Today only becomes interesting for our purposes with Band 3. Our first geography lesson begins not only with the Pilgrims settling somewhere in the New World, but also with New York City in a most interesting juxtaposition, namely in the form of a drawing of what is simply called "an old fort", again somewhere in the New World, next to a photograph of "skyscrapers in New York" (though only one full-length skyscraper is actually shown). Our first substantial piece of information about the layout of the North American continent does not appear until p. 58, where we are presented with a crude map of the U.S. with an inset of Great Britain for comparison of size, something incidentally which Learning English does not have. The map shows the cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Atlanta, Miami, New Orleans, Chicago, St.Louis, Minneapolis, Denver, Houston, Salt Lake City, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The purpose of giving all these place names on a map (without state lines, incidentally), with a couple of mountains and rivers, is to introduce an exercise using the question "What is the distance between X and Y?" or "How many inhabitants has X?". The latter is handled by listing the population figures for the aforementioned cities. It may interest you, as it did me, to learn that New York has 11,57o,ooo inhabitants and that in addition to Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, Philadelphia and Houston, that the cities St.Louis, Denver, Atlanta, and Minneapolis all have over 1,ooo,ooo people. I hope these whopping large numbers don't give either you or your pupils a distorted impression of the size of American cities. Nor do I hope that you won't be too disappointed, should you ever travel to the city of Minneapolis (something I would recommend you do for reasons I'll come to later), to discover that it has only 43o,ooo inhabitants, or that St.Louis has only 66o,ooo inhabitants, or that these and other cities mentioned are simply the largest unit within metropolitain areas that have indeed over 1,ooo,ooo inhabi-

tants, but are by no means as megolithic as the book would seem to make them.

English for Today, Band 1 and 2 don't present much as far as America is concerned, except that in Band 1, a certain Bill and Mary are seen flying to New York, "the biggest city in the U.S.," to be followed by a brief scene in a cafe in New York, where they order "orange juice, a cup of tea, a piece of cake, an egg and a packet of biscuits" against a backdrop of the Empire State Building.
In the next scene we are treated to Bill and Mary on their Uncle Henry's farm in Wisconsin (wherever that is) where they sing "Old McDonald Had a Farm."
Band 2 makes only passing reference to America, once in the form of an exercise question on p. 12, "Where's the Mississippi?" (a good question!), and on p. 27, where we return briefly to Bill, Mary, Aunt Jane, and Uncle Henry "on the farm in Wisconsin" to practice sentences in the simple past tense. Where, however, Wisconsin, even where New York is , is still very unclear at this point.

In Band 3 on p. 78 we get the first genuine geography lesson in the form of a presentation of the six New England States, complete with description of the major industries and a description of the climate. Three quite good photos, unfortunately without captions, one of the Boston State House, one of the Maine Coast, and one of a village in Vermount, complete the geographical picture of this volume. What follows is more historical in nature, including the Boston Tea Party and the Inauguration of Washington as first President.

Band 4 opens on p. 15 with the history of the railroad in the U.S., which is called the "railroad" not the "railway" as might be expected, considering the otherwise British bias found in these books. The major railroad lines in 1860 are shown on a map. This is an interesting chapter, being a mixture of history and fiction, the latter reinforced by teaching

the song about the exploits of Casey Jones, who was from Cayce "over in Kentucky". The next reference is on p. 52, in connection with the Civil War, with the two combattants in different colors, the northern states in blue, the southern states in grey. Then comes an entire chapter (ch. 6) on New York City with the physical limits of the five boroughs on a map, a rough outline of Manhattan, and six photos of the city, including one from the famous black-out of 1965.

It is not until Band 5/6 that our physical perspective expands considerably. The Midwest is taken up, starting on p. 68. Most of the presentation of the Midwest involves the agriculture of the Cornbelt, the Dairy Belt, the Winter Wheat Belt and the Summer Wheat Belt, and the industry of the Midwest, without special reference to particular metropolitain areas. We even learn in this book just where Wisconsin is, in the form of a photograph of an Indian maiden in a miniskirt shown against the backdrop of an area called the Wisconsin Dells, which is America's answer to the Fränkische Schweiz.
Unfortunately our information about Wisconsin is quickly blunted by a brief account by John Steinbeck, (from his Travels with Charley) of his first trip there, who describes it as a very pleasant place, but somewhat unbelievable. As the title of the chapter indicates "Wisconsin is loaded with surprises!"

English for You, which seems to be a "modernization" of English for Today, begins its approach to America from an entirely different angle, in Band 4.
The first formal contact is not the Mayflower or the City of New York, but rather "A meeting of a Black Student's Club" in a high school somewhere in the U.S., followed by a brief discussion of the American school system. The first actual place reference does not appear until p. 38, where the incident at Kent State University is briefly mentioned, as a

counter to the aforementioned school system, without mentioning where Kent State University is, unfortunately.

The next reference on p. 65 - 67 is the first Thanksgiving Day and the Pilgrim Fathers, and the Red Indians and 162o or 1621. But where this event took place is not indicated, even by name (= even the otherwise familiar place name "Plymouth" is completely absent) in its place is simply "the wilderness". But then we're used to this from other books.

On page 74 we receive our obligatory tour of New York with a photo of the famous skyline, but without the World Trade Center. Superlatives follow us around in the form of "some interesting information," such as the fact that New York has 8,ooo,ooo people (where are the other 3,57o,ooo mentioned in English for Today?), 1,ooo,ooo of whom live "in bad conditions in run down areas." There are, in addition, 26o,ooo city employees, 8oo window cleaning services, 2o,ooo eating places, 7oo hotels, and over 2,ooo,ooo trees (where?). In general, however, I found the presentation here to be one of the more balanced on New York, but for reasons that I'll get to later.

In Band 5/6 we get more on New York, starting on p. 12, sort of. We get a bird's eye/fish's eye view of the city, followed by the song "I like to be in America" from "West Side Story" about the problems Puerto Ricans have in finding work and proper housing in America, which of course, characterizes New York, doesn't it? On p. 14/15 there follows a brief summary of facts concerning the standard of living in the U.S. compared to the rest of the world.

On p. 16-19 there are photos of Chicago, a grain field somewhere in the Midwest, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Los Angeles, and Chinatown in San Francisco. These photos are not gratuitous; they serve as supplements to a story about "Seeing America" by train going from Chicago to San Francisco, though most of

the story deals with the phenomenon of the American railroad in the twentieth century and less with the actual scenery it passes through; again in the form of statistics (2222 miles from Chicago Los Angeles with locomotives that deliver 24oo hp etc. etc.)

Summarizing what German pupils would learn if they were to receive their information about the U.S. only through textbooks, we can say that the impression that most books create is that the U.S.A. is a very large, but rather vaguely defined country with a few cities, many with 1,ooo,ooo inhabitants each, between which are located the lands of the American Indians (variously called Red Indians, or North American Indians) and in which are located the ghettoes of the blacks (still called "Negroes" or "coloureds")and the Puerto Ricans (also referred to as "coloureds" in at least one instance).

With the exception of the sections of English for Today on New England and the Midwest, no real attempt is made to look at geographical units larger than a city or smaller than the entire country, except perhaps to divide the U.S. into the North, the Midwest, the South, and the rest! The authors either stay in one or two places, one of which is almost always New York, or move quickly across the entire country in large panoramic sweeps of landscape, municipal areas, and cultural units.

2) People

Language is used by people and people create impressions on other people through their language and their habits, the sum of which is called their "culture". A nation as diversified as the U.S. consists of many different groups, classifiable not only in terms of profession, age, religion, and ethnic background, but also in terms of their self-image, that is, in terms of how they as a whole see themselves and the world around them, or at least as they would like to be seen by others.
It is therefore interesting to discover whom a predominantly German-speaking audience (in the guise of textbook publishers) see as the typical American or what strikes them as indicative of the American personality.

The older textbooks under consideration here, specifically Learning English and English for Today, create the overall impression that American society consists of: 1) Red Indians 2) Negroes, and 3) people not unlike the Pilgrims who were somehow involved in the Boston Tea Party and the American Revolution. The order in which I have listed these three ethnic groups is not arbitrary, nor is the exclusivity (i.e., the fact that I mention only three groups) arbitrary.
It represents the concentration of interest shown by these and other textbooks as to the makeup of American society.

Newer textbooks namely English for a Start, English for You, and Learning English: Modern Course also spend a considerable amount of time on the first two groups, the Blacks and the Indians, almost to the exclusion of other possible ethnic groups, such as the Germans, the Spanish-speaking, the Polish, the Irish, the English, etc.
The impression this creates on the otherwise uninformed European mind you can probably already imagine.

Let me try to focus in on this with some examples from various textbooks.

Learning English begins, as mentioned earlier in connection with geography, with the Pilgrim Fathers in Teil 2 (p.67). The next specific ethnic group mentioned are the Indians, called American Indians (p. 83), mentioned only briefly, but succinctly.

++

This is immediately followed by a story of the underground railroad, involving one of the supposed causes of the Civil War, namely slavery which in turn involved a race of humans called here the "Negroes". The theme of the Black is continued in Teil 3, where a larger section, beginning on p.31, is devoted first to the so-called "Negro Revolt", starting with an incident involving Mrs. Rosa Parks, "a colored woman" arrested for sitting in the Negro section of a bus while whites were forced to stand; then to the "Negro Student" which is an other excerpt from John Steinbecks Travels with Charley relating a personal experience Steinbeck had when he picked up a black student between Jackson, Mississippi and Montgomery, Alabama, during the Black Liberation Movement of the late 196o's.

The section entitled "America and the Americans" (pp.41-48) describes the kinds of people who make up the American people in somewhat more detail.

++

On page 43 we learn a bit more about this division into ethnic groups what the authors all 1) the "Americans" and 2) the "Indians and the Negroes", the latter being referred to as "two racial minorities which have not yet become fully integrated into the American nationa," followed by more statistical figures. The statistics on the minorities are accurate in terms of their proportions, though the absolute numbers are out of date, that is, out of 18o,ooo,ooo Americans -- sorry, inhabitants of the U.S.A. -- 88% Americans (British, Germans, Italians, Scandinavions, Russians, etc) and 12% Indians and Negroes.

The lumping of the two groups is somewhat disturbing to me, because it creates the impression that we are dealing with a much larger and more homogeneous groups than is actually the case, despite the statistics, and that this group is somehow pitted in a kind of unspoken battle against the "Americans" (=whites). One would think that this -- let's call it "distortion" -- is in part due to the age of the textbooks involved, appearing as they did at the end of the 196o's when the Black Movement and the Indian Movements were still fairly new and unsettled.

However, newer textbooks suffer from the same disability. Learning English: Modern Course, for example, approaches the topic of the Americans in a somewhat different way, though it is by no means more satisfactory than its older sister of the same name. In Gym 3 there is little said about the black or any other ethnic minorities directly, but on p. 36 there is a fictitious letter from a girl, an English girl, to a friend back home in England in which she relates her first day in New York. What she says is instructive.

++

The follow-up letter on p. 44 is even more interesting.

++

Let me now relate a personal experience. I have cousins in New York. The first time I ever visited them, in 1965, they warned me expressly to avoid going up to Harlem alone and/or without a definite destination on only the major streets, and then only during the day, and/or in the accompaniment of a black, to the extent that such was possible then.

What white Aunt Sally and her white niece Helen have done is foolhardy at best. It is also in extremely bad taste, since the Blacks are tacitly viewed as living in some kind of zoo which a tourist can go and visit, the way they can take a tour of the Empire State Building! For the record, Harlem (as well as the South Side of Chicago, the Watts section of Los Angeles, the North Side of Minneapolis, and Selby-Dale

area of St. Paul) are not tourist attractions; they are urban living areas. They are not to be looked upon with any kind of tear-jerking curiosity.

In addition, the black American reacts nowadays with understandable aggrevation to being referred to as a "Negro", a term he has been trying to eliminate from the consciousness of the white since the 196o's, a fact that this book, printed in 1976, does not take into consideration. It is a term that your pupils should learn in its historical context but otherwise avoid.

One more point.Even in the darkest days and in the most biggoted areas of racial discrimination in the United States the Puerto Rican was never referred to as a "coloured". There were other terms used for Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, etc, but "coloured" was always reserved for the black, even for a time by the black themselves. Recall the N.A.A.C.P., the "National Association for Advancement of Colored People".

Band 4, as already indicated, contains a longer passage on the American Indians, which I find not only informative, but also well balanced in its approach to this one particular minority.

There is information given about the location of various tribes, about the history of the Indians' encounters with the European, including stories related to current life on the reservations and in the cities.

It is also one of the few accounts that do not refer to the Indians as "Red Indians," a term that is rarely used in the U.S. and which I personally find somehow unpleasant, since it reminds me of "red skins", a pejorative designation (at least in my dialect.) The book also relates the fact that the Indians are as diversified as the European in terms of

language, culture, life style, etc. something only hinted at in earlier works.

As long as we are on the subject of the Indian, not one German textbook of English mentions the one area where one can find the largest single concentration of Indians outside of the reservations namely Minneapolis, Minnesota. Indians are spoken of as living in the white man's towns, poor, without land or pride, their culture has been eliminated, or watered down by the insensitive white man, and yet even this negative undercurrent is never localized. The Indian is just out there somewhere in that amorphous geographical construct that is the North American continent, in large concentration camps called reservations. One thing is, of course, localized quite well: the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Massacre at Wounded Knee.

English for a Start, especially Band 4, has interesting things to tell us about American society. The cover itself is indicative of the atmosphere the book creates. It shows several blacks on an American street in a section of town with bars and night clubs (including the "Le Bunny Lounge" which serves Schlitz beer, a gratuitous piece of Americana.) Without knowing for sure, I suspect the city in question is New Orleans, though it could be anywhere in the South.

Inside there is the obligatory excursion on New York, its history and tourist attractions, seen through the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, British subjects on a tour of the city. Nothing is said about the people living there, though on p. 46 we are shown two pictures, one of a few people, mostly whites, sitting on the lawn in Central Park, and one of a scene of blacks sitting on the front stairs of a tenement building in Harlem, between which is a dialogue between the Bennetts and the tour guide:

++

This is a thoroughly unreal situation, one that no self-re-

specting tour guide would ever put him or herself into, so that I have to assume that it was inserted here simply to point out the supposed vast differences between the black and the white, which are bad enough, but are by no means as black or white as portrayed here.

On p. 51 we are treated to a cross section of the "People in New York", in the form of one Juan Rodriguez (a 16 year Puerto Rican living in "Hell's Kitchen") one Alfred Lowenstein (a 63 year old Manhattan businessman) and lastly Mrs. Bertha Hudson (a waitress at a lunch counter). Waitress seems to be a typical profession of black women in New York, according to the impression some textbooks create. You recall the scene in Band 1 of English for Today where Bill and Mary are in a cafe in New York ordering tea and orange juice and a sandwich and a packet of biscuits? The serving person is a black woman (though the drawing seems to have more white than black facial features). It is then no surprise that when we finally meet a black woman face to face she is a waitress.

All three of these "typical" New Yorkers have one thing in common: they're all either frustrated or disappointed or exhausted by the life they are forced to live in New York. As the authors comment before introducing these three people "It's a nice place to visit but I wouldn't want to live there"! I doubt that many of your pupils would want to live there either!

The Indian is also given special attention in this book beginning on p. 92 with a slightly romanticized story of a Sioux boy who discovers and reports an encampment of men "speaking a language he couldn't understand... the enemy", who are then attacked and robbed of their ponies. On p. 94 there is a drawing of an Indian village, made by a white man called John White in Virginia, probably of a Delaware Indian village, though this is not stated. In any event it doesn't

look like a Sioux village, the Sioux still being fresh in our minds from the aforementioned story.
On p. 9 we get a map of several Indian tribes, however, two of the tribes, the Iroquois and the Algonquin, are listed as living somewhere near Illinois or Tennessee, where in fact they never lived, being natives of what is now New York State. The Cherokee are listed as living in Oklahoma, which is where they live now, but not where they lived before the white man came, as indicated in the caption.

On p. 103 there is a text, supposedly a newspaper article that appeared in 1973 related to the Wounded Knee Massacre, with critical marginal notes supposedly written by an Indian, a Sioux no doubt, since this was the tribe immediately affected by the Wounded Knee incident.

Why European school pupils should be exposed to this kind of emotional debate when they know relatively little about the American society as a whole is something I cannot quite figure out. Sensationalism is not education.

From all this, it should be clear that the basic texts in use here in Germany are not always satisfactory in their approach to American society. The amount of factual information in them is often very heavily weighted down with touristic curiosities or pathos-laden sentiments about racial minorities, problems with students, pollution, traffic, the impersonality and vastness of everything.

True, there is enough tourism even in the information given about Great Britain, but little discussion is devoted to race problems in England or Wales or Scotland to the same extent that this is done for America.

What we do not get enough of in these books, in my opinion, is a broader picture of the life of the 80% of the U.S. population which is not Black or Indian or a resident of New

York, or an otherwise superficial statistic.
There are attempts to get away from this in English for You and English for a Start but not with total success, as we have seen.

I am not criticizing the handling of racial problems or problems such as pollution or the flight to the suburbs as such. There are many textbooks for the secondary level in the United States that could take a lesson from some of the things said especially about the Indian. What I am criticizing is the concentration on these aspects of American society as if they represented all there were to American society.

3) Language

This subject is one of my professional favorites and could be the subject of an extended discussion by itself. Let me however restrict myself to the approach most of the texts under discussion take to this subject.
As indicated at the beginning of the talk, all German textbooks of English begin with a British and British English bias, which perforce is carried throughout all levels. Pronunciation and spelling conventions are frequently retained even when discussing American events and places. Place names like "Baltimore" and "New Hampshire" are, for example, rendered without the final "r" sound, as would not be the case for most of the residents of the U.S. Words like "colou/or", "harbou/or", center/re","theater/re", etc. are frequently printed in the BE way, occasionally even where a proper name such as "New York Harbo(u)r" would almost demand the AE spelling (with "o" instead of "ou").
This is, however, a minor matter, compared with the treatment of vocabulary differences between British English and American English. All the books under discussion have at least one page entitled "British English-American English." Most emphasize spelling differences, such as English for Today, Band 4, p. 77, or vocabulary differences, such as Learning English:

Modern Course, Gym 4, p. 99, or spelling, vocabulary, and pronunciation differences, such as Learning English, Teil 3, p.38.

There are some original contributions to the subject. Learning English: Modern Course, as already indicated, lists vocabulary differences, but indicates at the top of each list that Americans usually say things like "sidewalk, freezer, elevator, and fall" whereas the British usually say "pavement, deep-freeze, life, autumn." This is an improvement over lists which categorically state that American English says one thing and British English says another.

English for You, Band 4, p. 4o/41, presents an interesting variation on the subject. A dialogue is presented on "School like in America" involving Steve and Jim, both "second year students" (alias "sophomores"!) at an American high school. Following a discussion of the contents of the dialogue, there is an exercise in which the pupils are asked to compare a list of sentences in Beitish English with their equivalents in the dialogue, that is, in American English, and to note the differences. Some of the so-called differences are a bit - or if you want, a trifle - suspicious to me, although I must admit that the dialogue does capture the way American high school students at least could speak; that is, the dialogue is genuine American English.
But compare for example the following sentences in your mind and ask yourself which is definitely AE and which is definitely BE.

Dad said he wouldn't let me have the car.
Dad said he wouldn't let me use the car.

And

If I want to play some basketball I'd better run.
If I want to play some basketball, I'd better hurry.

There are other examples that are much clearer, such as

"football game" vs. "football match", "I sure hope it isn't cold like last time" vs. "I do hope it isn't cold like the last time," and "why don't we go and play basketball with some of the guys" vs. "Let's play basketball with some of the others".
With this one exception none of the other books attempts to deal with phonomena such as whole utterances (sentences, phrases, etc.) or dialogues, which of course constitute the "flavor" of American English.

By and large I find no real fault with the handling of American English, to the extent that it is explicitly mentioned, in most of the books I looked at.
The worst offender however, seems to be Learning English, which may be problematic because of its age.
On p. 38 of Teil 3 we get the first inkling of potential trouble. Along with the differences between BE and AE in terms of spelling, pronunciation, and vocabulary. In terms of spelling we are also told that in "American" there are spellings of common words such as "though, through, night" etc. in the form of "tho, thru, nite" etc. It is true that one does see these spelling often enough, but they are by no means indicative of accepted formal spelling conventions in the U.S. They have their place in advertising, occasionally in local newspapers, perhaps in brief handwritten notes, but are definitely not Standard American English, at least not yet.

As already indicated, more or less in passing, occasional slip-ups are to be found, especially in Learning English. In Teil 1 we have that scene in the cafe in New York where Billy and Sue order among other things "a packet of biscuits". The black waitress did not react, as her real-life counterpart would surely have, by staring at her British customers in a somewhat puzzled manner, wondering why they would want biscuits with tea since everyone knows you eat biscuits with turkey and mashed potatoes. Or consider the following anec-

dote from Teil 3, p. 48, "He didn't think so...." to "No, I don't," he answered, "for I am a Red Indian."

++

That last sentence is not only not American English; it's not even good British English.
Permit me to translate it into rhetorically meaningful English: "No, I don't; I'm an Indian."

In fairness to the major publishers of English language textbooks here in the Federal Republic, especially Klett, Lensing and Diesterweg, it should be said that quite useful books on America are available.

Books such as Modern Life or The Changing Scene would seem to fulfill the request for a broader view of the United States. Both contain very readable texts about various aspects of life in both the U.S. and Great Britain.
They have only one drawback. The contents of each were not written or edited by Germans, but by Americans or Britains. In reality, both are anthologies of brief essays, short stories, abbreviated journalistic articles and poems, written by original authors, that is, not with the express purpose of teaching non-Americans or non-Britains about their respective cultures.
In addition, they generally tend towards the literary or poetic use of language, and only occasionally present hard facts about American society as such. Hard facts does not mean more statistics, mind you; simply more descriptive prose that can be readily absorbed and processed by non-native speakers.
If you like, many of the texts in both books give depth, but little superficiality, that is, they are written by Americans for internal consumption, but otherwise have no immediately visible connection to one another. Your students would probably respond only on the basis of the preconditioning they receive from other levels of their textbooks, not necessarily as the author intended.

Add to this there is a disparity in the chronology of many of the items in these two books. For example, in The Changing Scene there is a section entitled "The American Identity" beginning with an essay called "Welcome to my shores" written by J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur in 1793, followed by an excerpt from Steinbecks' Travels with Charley, 1962, then an item by the black essayist and playwright James Baldwin, 1961, followed by a somewhat impressionistic description of New York by E.B. White from 1954, which is immediately followed by a, if you like, naturalistic description of American Cities, with the wry title "Nice Places to Visit" (sounds familiar!) from Newsweek magazine 1 (1969) concentrating on the seedy aspects of New York, Chicago, Detroit and Atlanta, typical"nice places " to visit.
The last text in this tour of the sociological art gallery of America is another excerpt from Travels with Charley in which Steinbeck talks about the craving Americans seem to have for historical markers (such as Elvis Presley's birthplace), about hunting in America, and Mobile Homes, a nice supplement to your chapters on the prairies.

Charley, by the way, is Steinbeck's dog. Perhaps textbook authors here in Germany are having difficulty finding things for Billy and Mary to say to each other about American society, and so find Steinbeck and his dog suitable substitutes. If America is not going to the dogs, at least one dog is going to America!

Modern Life is not divided into a British and an American section, but rather into topics, which are then handled by bringing together various sources from British and American writers.
The approach here is also somewhat broader than that in the Changing Scene in that not all contributors are poets or essayists or novelists or even journalists. There are reprints of articles from magazines, newspapers, even advertising flyers such as that from the Sears Roebuck Catalogue and the

Volkswagen Corporation of America (a word from our sponsors perhaps?).

As for the social scene, I would recommend the essay by Vance Packard on "Social Class in America" and the one from Newsweek on the "Middle American". From among all the other essays about the black and the Indian and the student and the liberated woman you will find these quite useful.

But as I indicated a moment ago, the material in these books was not originally written with the non-native speaker of English in mind. Thus they really don't belong in the present discussion. They represent a leap from the pre-digested material that is otherwise found in textbooks to the real world they intend to describe.

Winding down I would like to mention two books which come close to giving a more balanced view of American society than the others I have commented on up until now.
The first is called Catching up with America (Klett Verlag).
The other is English G, Level 4 A, (Oldenbourg Verlag).

As the title implies Catching up with America gives the learner an opportunity to observe the U.S. from many, to be exact, 28, different angles, grouped together into the topic areas "Political Foundations," "Economic Matters", and "Social Problems." Each chapter is divided into the following parts: first a dialogue related to the main theme, such as Washington DC, the U.S. Constitution, the Economy, Transportation, Skilled Labor (actually Skilled Unemployment), Racial Minorities etc.
The second part is a prose description of the topic. The third is an annotated reading passage based on an original document (newspaper article, short story, book chapter etc.). And fourth is a section called"hints for translation" explaining idioms and other expressions used in the text.

The value of such a source book is indisputable, since it balances original unprocessed material with learning material designed for the, in this case, secondary school audience. In addition the book does not concentrate its energies on describing the special social problems of the Black or Indians, or inundating us with statistics about the number of crimes committed or the number of television hours consumed. The book also deals with the life of the average American, be he or she white or black, in chapters such as "John Doe and his kids" or "Running away from the city."

It is perhaps unfortunate that this very readable book was not originally written by Germans for Germans; it is in reality a German adaptation of a French text with German language examples where called for. Still and all, a book to recommend, didacticly as well as in terms of content.

English G accepts the fact that German pupils will have been exposed to Britain and British English, but still devotes most of its energies to teaching English from the American point of view.

The first thing that struck me was the maps on the inside front and back cover, the first a simple, somewhat humorous drawing of the states, except Alaska and Hawaii.
The other is a more formal one with all the states including Alaska and Hawaii as well as the six time zones in the U.S., which is not found in other books, incidentally.
The introduction to the book sets the (positive) tone for what comes after.

++

Then the author goes into the history very briefly.
The first unit is as far as I am concerned not only one of the best about New York City, if you insist on starting everything about the U.S. with New York, but also the most balanced portayal of the ethnic background of the U.S..

There is no simplified division into Black, White, and Red. Right on the first full page, p. 9, we are introduced to people whose backgrounds are German, Italian, English, Vietnamese, Polish, Puerto Rican, Irish, Chines, Black, and Indian. Although the next few pages are devoted to three of these, the Italian, the German and the Black, the authors are quick to add that it is difficult to talk about "typical Americans".

This tenor is maintained throughout the book. On p. 19 for example, we are shown three photos of different kinds of housing in New York, in a suburb, in the heart of Manhattan, and in Harlem. But instead of showing specific kinds of people, (= ethnic groups) who live in these different kinds of dwelling, the captions indicate only that land is less expensive outside of Manhattan which is why there are more detached houses there, that only better-off (= richer) people can afford to live in apartments in Manhattan, and that the slums are awful. No mention is made of specific ethnic groups living in specific areas.
On p. 35 we have our lesson in British English-American English, with the straightforward statement "People in Britain and the U.S.A. speak a common language-English". Then it goes into the differences, but these are familiar and not controversial.

Unit 2 takes up the subject of the Indian, but with a mixture of history, exploded myth, the current situation and just a touch of polemic, but not what used to be called "bleeding heart liberalism," simply hard reality viewed from the inside.

Unit 3 could be labelled a "day in the life of a German at an American high school," touching, as it does classroom, student life, sports, and home life through the eyes of a German visiting an American family in Portland, Oregon.
The only thing I find fault with in this chapter is the passage on p. 61, in which Jochen, the "boy from Germany" is "sur-

prised to find out that he could call everybody by their first names. It was 'Hi, Jack and Susan' not 'How do you do, Mr. and Mrs. Scott'. They just wouldn't accept using last names."

There is a wide spread myth which states that Americans establish personal relationships on a first name basis with each other as quickly as possible, that the word "friend" indicates a much more superficial phenomenon than German "Freund" and so on. It may be safe to say that as people my age get older, we can address more and more people by their first names, but I doubt that a 17-year old would be offered the opportunity of addressing an adult by his/her first name, especially if the adults were members of the teenager's host family or their friends. A bit more circumspection is called for on this subject. Fortunately Jochen reacted appropriately to the situation; his American counterpart would not have felt completely comfortable on a first name basis with every adult, either.

Unit 5, which revolves around television, has its good points and its bad points. Its main good point is the fact that it captures the flavor of this most important of American institutuions and its influence on the American mind, especially the juvenile mind. It reproduces a page, supposedly from a newspaper, with annotated t.v. program listings, which, if the teacher knows anything himself about American t.v., can prove most enlightening.
It also has one of the most egregious parodies on the American t.v. quiz show that you're ever likely to find anywhere, called "The Price is All Right," which though exaggerated is as far as I'm concerned a true reflection of the atmosphere of one of the more immature aspects of the American entertainment industry.

The one major bad point involves using a t.v. Western as an

illustration of the relationship between t.v. programming and t.v. commercials. The scene thus used for purposes of interruption for a commercial involves a scene, in which an Indian threatens a white man with death after tying him to a stake. If this book were to be shown to an American high school audience, this would be the one thing that would surely guarantee its outright rejection from the school curriculum. It also might net its introducer a polite but business-like visit from a representative of the American Indian Movement.

English G, to summarize, seems to me to be the best of the books I have seen in terms of its portrayal of present day American society, primarily because of the variety of information and images it supplies about Americans and their daily life. It is not heavy with history; it is not overburdoned with statistics; it makes few sweeping statements about the plight of specific groups; it is not physically dull in its layout. It is by no means perfect, but does show the kinds of things a careful text book author can do with a complex subject.

Discussion

1)
A good teacher will never simply present the textbook without preparing the pupils in some way for the material to come, by using maps, word lists, relating personal experience, etc. Why , then, are you so concerned about the "inaccuracy" of the content of the textbooks you are criticizing?

The alert teacher will always add extra material to the textbook, that is true. No textbook stands, or should stand, alone in the learning process. Yet the textbook is frequently the pupil's first formal contact with a given subject. The impressions it makes on him or her in their contact with the subject frequently last beyond the book, especially if the impressions tend to confirm or reinforce prejudices or preconceptions he or she may have had before beginning the formal study of, in this case, English. It is for this reason that I find many of the passages in the textbooks analyzed here somewhat disturbing in their presentation of contemporary American society, for relatively trivial reasons such as the spelling of words or even the choice of particular words (AE vs. BE), as well as for more serious reasons, such as the portrayal of racial groups or the presentation of hackneyed cliches about the development of the American West in relationship to current society.
The influence of language textbooks on a learner's attitudes towards the foreign culture is by no means absolute, but if a teacher has to spend unnecessary time correcting or updating or otherwise "readjusting" the data or opinions, she or he doesn't really need the book, does he or she?

2)
You criticize the inclusion of things like New York, the plight of blacks and other minorities, statistics about the size and diversity of North American landscape, etc. These are, however, the things which make America from Europe. They are fascinating and do help to stimulate interest. What do you suggest instead, if the subject of the U.S.A. is to maintain the interest of pupils of English in German secondary schools?

What may have irritated me most about the books I read for this paper was the repetitiveness of the themes in most of the books. Almost every book has a full-length chapter on New York, which in my eyes is not the most representative American city. In many ways I feel we are doing our pupils a disservice by serving them the extremes, the cliches, the television glossiness, as if such were typical of the U.S. After all New York may be fascinating, but it represents only 5 % of the total population and even less of the geographical area of the United States. Yet some series spend as much as 8 % of a book on the subject. And when it comes to the ethnic make-up of the U.S. it is, I admit, fascinating to realize the hundreds of different cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds present in most larger American cities. Yet this doesn't show how the majority of Americans live on a daily basis. In this connection I think it is safe to say that the amount of basic information German secondary pupils receive about British society(in relationship to that which they receive about racial minorities in Great Britain) is considerably greater than the information they recive about the 8o % of the American populace that is neither black nor Indian nor New Yorker! To repeat something I said in the main part of the paper, sensationalism is not education. At best it is a stimulus to education, if, indeed, our pupils need that kind of stimulation!

3)
You have been talking continuously about the "average" or "typical" or "8o %" American. Could you please describe him?

You'll permit me the arrogance, or, if you like, the gall, to present myself as "typical", whatever that means! Actually I have tried to avoid terms like "typical" or "average" but the impression of the contrary may still have come through. I'm afraid, however, that the answer to that question is very difficult to give. The 8o % of the American population which is not black or Indian is in reality also in-

credibly diverse. In the final analysis what makes a culture or a society or a people typical is the sum of all of its features divided by its daily routine viewed through the lense of a week, month, or year. Certain daily habits are shared by most Americans. The same is true of weekly schedules, as well as annual holidays and festivals. The physical environment is also diverse, which contributes not only to the mentality of the immediate occupants of that area but also to the country as a whole. Communication, especially mass communication, has helped to unify as well as to neutralize extreme differences between two people or two groups. Yet communication frequently presents only the few most noticable features of the surface of the society, not always its depth. The European would be best advised to be a bit more circumspect in her or his perception of the American since the American represents more diversity and unity at the same time than the average (?) European, be he or she the average German or French (person) or Spaniard or Briton, is used to.

I, as a Midwesterner with a non-localizable Standard American English accent whittled down by exposure to many varieties of English as well as to the dynamism of a foreign language, may indeed set himself up as a model of "Average-ness." But then the next person from a different area of the U.S. may with equal justification set herself up as typical.

What is typical German, by the way? Munich? Hamburg? Berlin? A Rheinländer? A Bavarian? A Franconian? An 18-year-old factory worker in Wanne-Eichel? a 70-year-old retiree in Marktredwitz? A student in Giessen (sorry, Lahn!)? Take a look at some of the textbooks written for native speakers of English to teach German and see if you agree with the image of present-day German (West or East?) society presented. Start/Continue collecting your information!

REFERENCES

Learning English. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag.
+ Ausgabe A. Teil 2, 197o.
+ Ausgabe A. Teil 3 (neu), 1969.

Learning English: Modern Course. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag
+ Gym 3, 1976
+ Gym 4, 1977

English for Today. Lehrwerk für English als erste Fremdsprache. Dortmund: Verlag Lambert Lensing/Hannover: Hermann Schroedel Verlag.
+ Band 3 (neu), 1974, 1977
+ Band 4, 1968, 1976
+ Band 5/6, 1969, 1977

English for you. Lehrwerk für Englisch als erste Fremdsprache. Dortmund: Verlag Lambert Lensing/Hannover: Hermann Schroedel Verlag.
+ Band 4, 1972, 1977
+ Band 5/6, 1973, 1977

English for a Start. Dortmund: Verlag Lambert Lensing/Hannover: Hermann Schroedel Verlag.
+ 3, 1974
+ 4, 1975

Learning English A4/B3. Modern Life. Lese- und Arbeitsbuch für die Ober- und Studienstufe. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1971, 1974.

Kurt Blohm, Heinz Rohr. The Changing Scene in Britain and the USA. Oberstufenlesebuch. Frankfurt: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg.

Hélène Clément, Catherine Tomerson. Catching up with America. Economy and Civilization. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1973, 1975

English. Ausgabe G, Große Ausgabe. Band 4A für das 8. Schuljahr an Gymnasien und Gesamtschulen. München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1976.